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The Collector and Art Critic

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE ARTS AND CRAFTS, BIBLIOGRAPHY, ETC.

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FIFTEEN CENTS THE COPY.

WANTED.—A subscriber desires to purchase one or two representative examples by A. P. Ryder, D. W. Tryon, and examples from the early American portrait painters. Address the Editor.

FOR SALE.—An equestrian portrait of George Washington by Fletcher, about 60x50 inches. Particulars may be had by addressing M. E. L., care of THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC.

There is indeed no such thing as spontaneous generation in matters of art and literature, and to understand an artist or a writer properly it is necessary to regard him as a product of his surroundings, even of prenatal influences.

An artistic home atmosphere of several generations would then account for the personality of Louis Herzog, an American painter whose work is, comparatively speaking, very little known in this country, but whose standing in the European art world is most enviable. Chatting with him in his studio in the Bryant building, and surrounded by many canvases which must be regarded as of extraordinary merit, one is impressed with the mental versatility of this man, and the manysidedness of his art expression. His painting is a combination of refinement and force, and has great charm to cultivated eyes, although the vulgar may not always perceive the subtle beauties or deep conception of the theme.

One of the boldest attempts is a scene of Brooklyn Bridge which curves in the upper part of the composition, while below steamers and tugs plow through the choppy water and send up clouds of steam and smoke. There is luster and liquidity in the waves, and an envelope of hazy, steamy atmosphere through which the great span curls like a serpent.

A picture which received a medal at the St. Louis exposition shows a sketch of Maine dunes, seen from an eminence. The burnt brown color of the autumn field is relieved by the white, woolly flock of sheep scattered most naturally in the dip of the land. A sketch made of the corner of 34th street and Broadway in wintry snows was done *con amore* to serve the artist as a souvenir of one of New York's landmarks, the old Tabernacle church, soon to be demolished. There are also misty mornings in Jersey and at Easthampton, L. I., and for foreign subjects a most interesting street-scene in Naples, with its crowd of passersby and quaint old houses which line the narrow thoroughfare, together with some excellent views of Frisian canals and villages. The sunsets which the artist loves to paint are fine pictures of "pure artistry" to use a phrase coined by Sir Walter Armstrong.

In evidence of the popularity which Louis Herzog enjoys abroad it may be stated that at an individual exhibition which the artist held of his pictures in Munich a few years ago, there were thirty-eight pictures sold out of a total of fifty-seven, an important canvas being acquired by the Pinakothek and two by the King of Italy. Mr. Herzog rarely exhibits at the New York exhibitions, having, with many other excellent painters, the feeling of dissatisfaction with the manner in which these are conducted at the present time.

THE DUTY ON ART.

The agitation carried on to repeal the duty on art objects has no relation whatever to the general tariff question, which is an entirely different matter and involves utterly different considerations. The tax on the importation of works of art is a tax on culture and civilization itself. It is barbarous.

It is pleasant to report that the anomalous decision made some weeks ago, that the etchings of Miss Mary Cassatt were commercial products and dutiable, has been reversed and these etchings have been admitted free of duty as being works of art executed by an American citizen while temporarily residing abroad. Appraiser Byron S. Waite defines etchings and their process of making and distinguishes "painter" etchings, as they are known, from the ordinary commercial product, and states that the etchings made by Miss Cassatt are of the first named class.

"Painter etchings," says the appraiser, "are those in which the etched plate is the handiwork of an artist and embodies an original conception, as distinguished from etchings which are merely copies. 'Painter' etchings generally consist of but a limited edition of from twenty-five to thirty-five copies.

"We think it must be conceded by all who are familiar with the operation of producing 'painter' etchings, and by those who are competent to judge of artistic work, that the etchings in the case now before us must be classed as works of art."

A similar claim was also sustained pertaining to the protest of E. L. Garvin & Co. against the assessment of 50 per cent. ad valorem duty upon a Carrara marble altar for St. James' Pro-Cathedral, Brooklyn. The importer set up the claim that the altar in question was a work of art, imported for a religious society, and under the provisions of section 703 of the Dingley Tariff law was non-dutiable.

This is a commendable reversion of the leatherheaded decisions of the first instance. There may be some hope yet for light—the light of common sense in the Custom House. It does not, however, silence the old Cato cry: "Carthage must be taken"—in our present day form: "The duty on art must be abolished."

Why should it not be abolished? The courts are commencing to awaken to the fact that "works of art" should be free, in giving the Treasury Department a set-back wherever it wants to collect duty in nonconformance to the exceptions of the present law. Instance the following: On March 11 of last year, the board of United States general appraisers in sustaining a claim made by Arthur Bohn, held that pen and ink drawings of an artistic character, showing the design of a building intended as an art museum, were "works of art," and as such free of duty under the provisions of the Dingley tariff. Mr. Bohn drew the plans while residing abroad. The surveyor of customs at Indianapolis, however, regarded the sketches as being dutiable at the rate of 20 per cent. ad valorem under the provisions in the tariff law for "pen and ink drawings."

In a recent decision, the United States circuit court for the district of Indiana sustains the board of appraisers in admitting the drawings free of duty.